

Written Testimony in Favor of SB 185

My name is Jessica Crist, and I am Bishop of the Montana Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. I represent about 50,000 Lutherans in 125 congregations across the state of Montana.

I speak in favor of abolition of the death penalty in Montana. There was a time when capital punishment was the law of the land. There was also a time when women could not vote, when slavery was legal, and when native peoples were run off the land they had inhabited for centuries. We do not live in those times any more.

The role of government is to protect ensure safety and justice. Both sides of the abolition argument cite studies that support their point of view—that the death penalty is or is not a deterrent to crime, that capital punishment does or does not bring closure to victims' families.

The consensus of civilized nations around the world is that the death penalty is immoral, ineffective, discriminatory and barbaric.

Two wrongs do not make a right. Killing someone to teach others not to kill is illogical. It does not bring back the dead. It sounds a lot more like revenge than justice.

As a Christian I proclaim a God who, as an innocent, succumbed to the death penalty of the all-powerful Roman Empire. In my theology, that death was enough. No more.

I urge you to vote yes for SB 185, the abolition of the death penalty. It's time for Montana to join the rest of the civilized world.

Bishop Jessica Crist

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